

CHOOSE LIFE NEWSLETTER



Nishnawbe
Aski Nation
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Our team acknowledges that NAN communities have varying dialects, languages, and cultural teachings. Teachings vary from First Nation to First Nation and even from one geographic region to another. For more information, please consult with a Traditional Elder, Healer or Medicine Person. With respect to this, our newsletter will do our best to be inclusive to both Ojibwe, Ojicree, and Cree teachings that are shared. Please share any teachings that you are comfortable sharing and it will be included in our newsletter.

APRIL: SUGARBUSHING MOON

OJIBWE: ISKIGAMIZIGEGIIZIS

For many Indigenous people, late-winter or early-spring (depending on your perspective) is the time to be in the Iskigamizigan or Sugar Bush. It is a period when everything and everyone slows down. It is a period when we spend time together.



In the Sugar Bush, we meet up with friends and family to reconnect. With snow still on the ground, it is time to share stories and collectively prepare for the coming spring. It is a moment to rejoice in the returning sun. This moon is also known as Sucker Moon, Pink Moon, Breaking Ice Moon, Broken Snowshoe Moon, Frog Moon, Sugar Maker Moon, as well as many others.

APRIL: SUCKER MOON

OJIBWE: NAMEBINE GIIZIS

The fourth moon of Creation is Sucker Moon. This is the time when sucker goes to the Spirit World in order to receive cleansing techniques for this world. When it returns to this realm, it purifies a path for the Spirits and cleanses all our water beings. During this time we can learn to become healed healers.

THIRTEEN MOON TEACHINGS

The cycles of the moon determine our yearly calendar. The changes that come with each passing moon indicate the times for planting, harvesting, hunting and gathering. In the Anishnawbe calendar the names of each month includes the word 'moon' and reflects the close connection between the cycles of the moon and the plant and animal life on Turtle Island.

DO YOU HAVE A CULTURAL AND/OR LAND BASED COORDINATOR?

The Choose Life Cultural Coordinator is looking to connect with all of the Choose Life Cultural & Land-Based Coordinators. Please scan the QR code with your phone to fill out this form on their behalf or forward the newsletter to them. Or you can email kdrake@nan.ca to request a link to access the form.

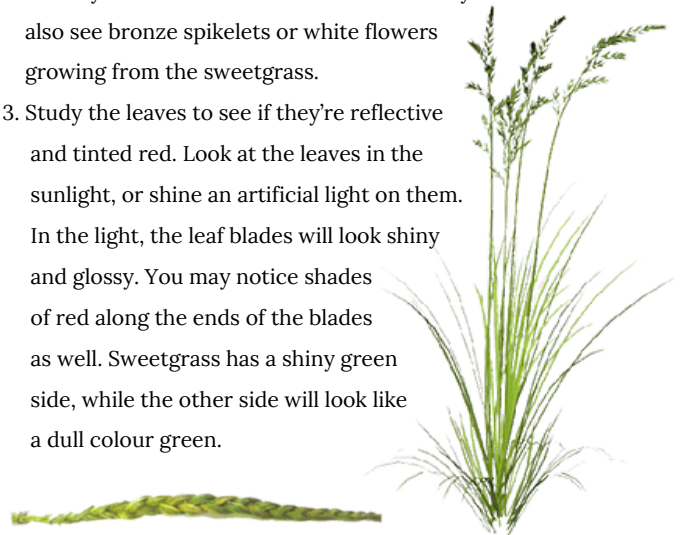


SWEETGRASS TEACHINGS

All elements of a sweet grass braid are symbolic and have significance. The braid is said to be the hair of Mother Earth and the three sections of the braid represent Mind, Body and Spirit. By braiding it, we bring those aspects of our being together, care for and strengthen them. The sweetgrass, once braided, is stronger than any one strand on its own, which symbolizes community and unity.

WHAT DOES SWEETGRASS LOOK LIKE?

1. Check the plant to see if its both green and purple. Examine the top and middle sections of the stem to confirm that the plant is green throughout. After this, check toward the roots of the plant to see if the lower stem looks purple or reddish-purple. If the plant doesn't change colors at all, then it might not be sweetgrass.
2. Look for clusters of yellow-green spikelets or flowers. Like the majority of the stem, some spikelets might look green, or have a yellowish colour on the ends. You may also see bronze spikelets or white flowers growing from the sweetgrass.
3. Study the leaves to see if they're reflective and tinted red. Look at the leaves in the sunlight, or shine an artificial light on them. In the light, the leaf blades will look shiny and glossy. You may notice shades of red along the ends of the blades as well. Sweetgrass has a shiny green side, while the other side will look like a dull colour green.



WHERE DO I FIND SWEETGRASS?

- Search in wet partially shaded areas for sweetgrass
- Likely found near marshes, wet meadows, lakeshores, bogs, and other wet places
- Open tall grassy areas
- Clearings or edges of forests

WELCOME TO THE TEAM



Boozhoo, my spirit name is Gentle Spirit of the Wolf and my given name is Tanya Forneri. I am honoured to have been born and mostly raised in Thunder Bay, Ontario, which is the traditional territory of the Fort William First Nation, original signatories of the Robinson Superior Treaty of 1850. I am an online student in the Indigenous Social Work program with Laurentian University.

I began this learning journey later in life as a pathway towards personal development. I feel I have spent so much of my life not truly understanding myself or the world around me and when I began working with Nishnawbe Aski Nation in 2014 (in the Community Wellness Department), I was learning things from my colleagues I was completely unaware of my whole life. This experience is what led me to further my education. I have been an online learner since 2017 and I hope to graduate next academic year. Since beginning both my working and learning journey I have been so honoured to meet and work with so many wonderful and gifted individuals. I have been able to learn how culture and identity reclamation is paramount to healing and wellness and how immersion in these practices from a young age, can be protective factors against suicide ideation and behaviours for children and youth. Having been a youth preoccupied with suicide ideation and behaviour, it is so near and dear to my heart and spirit to work with others who have similar feelings to help them see in themselves, the gifts they are and possess. I have so many things that I love to do such as yoga, prayer, meditation, reading, walking, camping, traveling all while spending time with loved ones but because I work fulltime and learn in the evenings, I often don't have time for many things but I take the most important things and make sure I practice them daily as a part of my self-care plan. I learned from a trusted friend that caring for the self is the greatest act of love onto others so I make sure to keep my cup full. I look forward to learning from all of the amazing Choose Life Warriors in the NAN Territory and within the NAN Organization as well!

HONOURABLE MENTIONS

NAN Choose Life would like to acknowledge the amazing contributions by Jenna Panontin. Jenna has been with the Choose Life Team as a social work student since September 2022. Jenna joined the team amidst the organizing and coordination of our Choose Life AGM gathering in Ottawa, ON. Her skills and contributions truly supported the team and the overall success of the Choose YOUTH AGM. Jenna has made many contributions to Choose Life during her time as our student. Jenna has successfully managed the responsibilities of two roles at NAN, as Jenna is the Training Coordinator for the Training team in the Community Wellness Department at NAN, and she has successfully completed her placement for her HBSW Degree as of March 2023. Jenna is a Mother of two and is passionate about being out on the land. She loves the outdoors, as well as going hunting and fishing. Congratulations Jenna on acquiring your degree in Social Work. Miigwetch for all that you have done for Choose Life!



MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID - MARCH 2023



What is Mental Health First Aid?

Mental Health First Aid is a training course designed to give members of the public the skills to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. The evidence behind the program demonstrates that it builds mental health literacy, decreases stigmatizing attitudes, and helps individuals identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illness.

**CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF
THE NEWLY CERTIFIED
CHOOSE LIFE MENTAL HEALTH
FIRST AID RESPONDERS!**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHOOSE LIFE NETWORKING CALLS

Please join our team once a month on Microsoft Teams to stay connected with one another!

Dates: Every 2nd Wednesday of the month

Apr 12 | May 10 | Jun 7 | Jul 12 | Aug 9
Sept 13 | Oct 11 | Nov 8 | Dec 13

Time: Log in @ 10:45AM EST
Starts @ 11:00AM EST

There will be **attendance prizes!**

TRAINING OPPORTUNITY

Maple Leaf Training on April 25-27, 2023. All spots have been filled! Our Team is looking forward to seeing you there!

STAFF CONTACT UPDATE FORM

Has your team had any recent staff changes? Please let us know so we can update your contact information in our database. Scan the QR code to the right or contact Rauslyn Laviolette our Choose Life Officer and she will provide you with the link to complete the form.



RESOURCES

NAN HOPE
CALL 1-844-NAN-HOPE (626-4673) nanhope.ca

Hope for Wellness Help Line
CALL 1-855-242-3310
hopeforwellness.ca

Talk4Healing
CALL 1-855-554-HEAL (4325)
talk4healing.com

Please reach out if you need support!

Kids Help Phone
CALL 1-800-668-6868 Text 686868 kidshelpphone.ca

CMHA Crisis Response
thunderbay.cmha.ca
Call Thunder Bay: 807-346-8282

District / Toll-Free: 1-888-269-3100 Northwest Region: 1-866-888-8988

Crisis Services Canada
crisisservicescanada.ca
CALL 1-833-456-4566
TEXT 45645

REFERENCES

<https://mushkiki.com/our-programs/moontime-and-grandmother-moon/>
<http://www.glifwc->
<https://justseeds.org/sugarbush/>
https://www.kanawayhitowin.ca/?page_id=214
<https://www.onwa.ca/full-moon-ceremony>
<https://www.medwinequas.com/post/oji-cree-13-moons-teachings>
<https://www.wikihow.com/Identify-Sweetgrass>

NAN CHOOSE LIFE TEAM

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(* RECENT STAFF CHANGES)

NAN Choose Life welcomes new staff and wishes those who have left the Choose Life Team many thanks for their role in Choose Life and well wishes as they journey forward.

CULTURAL DATABASE

Please share any Cultural Resources that you would like to make accessible on the Cultural Database or if you know of anyone interested in sharing their cultural or land-based teachings/skills/gifts with Choose Life. Please fill out the Cultural Helper Form. It is accessible at: Choose Life - Nishnawbe Aski Nation (nan.ca). You can also scan our QR code. If you have any questions regarding the database or would like a link forwarded to you, please contact Kiaya Drake.



HOW CAN I CONTRIBUTE?

By emailing Kiaya Drake to share teachings, resource links, photos, activities and/or events which took place in your community that you wish to highlight and share with other Choose Life Teams throughout NAN. You can also nominate someone in our Honorable Mentions section. You can do this by scanning the QR code.

